



UHBW Rheumatology  
Patient Advisory Group

## PAG Newsletter Autumn 2022

### PAG News

It has taken a while but PAG was thrilled to be able to welcome patients back to the seminar room at the BRI on Wednesday 5th October! As the room still has limitations on the number of people it can hold, this first meeting was offered to long-term PAG members. We trialed a hybrid meeting with the department's clinical lead, Dr Liz Perry, joining us on the video screen (seen below with Sister Denise Pope). It was a great success and hope that having different ways of attending meetings will enable more people to join them.

We talked about our experiences of the past two and a half years and all agreed that to see people and talk and share again was really helpful.



For those of you who have visited the department for a long time we can report that the student accommodation on the site of the old rheumatology department has been finished and welcomed its first residents in September. Whilst we reminisced about the good old days Denise reminded us how short of space it was!

On a practical note we talked about PAG; what has changed since the pandemic and the different needs that our members have. We'd love to hear your views on what PAG can do for you. Going forward we plan to meet every two months on a Wednesday morning. The next meeting is will take place on 7th December and we will send out details in due course.

With best wishes Mike Deane, Chair of PAG

### Clinical News

Over the past couple of years a combination of short staffing, a high demand for urgent appointments and the physical capacity of the department being restricted by covid distancing measures led to a significant backlog in the department. For sometime there was equivalent of only 3.5 full time consultants instead of 5.5. The department has worked hard to recruit new staff and are very pleased to welcome consultants Bashaar Boyce, who started in early Aug and comes to us from Gloucester and Hereford, and Emma Davies. Emma joined the team at the beginning of September and was previously in Bath.

The department's priority now is to get more people seen and to get back to offering routine appointments. The team are largely delivering face-to-face appointments using all six clinic rooms and have made good headway on clearing the backlog. Most clinicians are also running one telephone clinic per week remotely which helps ease the demand on consultation rooms in the department. Telephone clinics, it has been found, are a good solution for some patients, especially for fitting appointments around work and other commitments. As more patients can be seen during a telephone clinic they help free up more face to face appointments for those that need them.

### Covid measures

Social distancing has now been removed from the waiting room which has helped with the number of appointments the department can offer. Staff are still wearing masks to protect themselves and patients. They are still being very cautious as many rheumatology patients are immunocompromised and having staff off sick with covid has a huge impact on the service. You are welcome to wear a mask when attending an appointment, they are free to pick up at both the main BRI entrance and the King Edward Building entrance.

## Biologics

You may be aware that the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines have changed to allow biologic medication to be offered to patients with moderate disease activity. This has had a big impact on resources as patients on biologics need careful monitoring. The department have been working closely with rheumatology colleagues in north Bristol to implement the new guidelines. They are also very pleased to have secured funding to employ a senior nurse specialist and a specialist pharmacist for the department. These roles are currently being advertised.

## Rheumatology Self-Management App

The Living Well app, which we first reported on last Christmas, will soon be launched. It is designed to help you work with your rheumatology team to get the best out of your rheumatology service, to understand your condition better and to receive advice on how to live well with your arthritis. The content has been brought together from multiple sources and has been reviewed and validated by clinical teams and patient representatives. Ask your doctor or nurse about the app at your next appointment! We know that apps don't suit everyone, the department has assured us it is just one of several tools they have to support patients.

## Nursing News

Over the summer the nursing team were very sorry to say goodbye to two long standing colleagues; Terrie Stocker and Sheryl Hullah. Terrie is moving on to a role in the Care Quality Commission which is the independent body that assesses health and social care services in England. You can read a message from Terrie below. Sheryl plans to downsize and travel the world!

We were delighted to meet Terrie's replacement at the PAG meeting; Ronu Roy. Ronu is a Clinical Nurse Specialist who has worked in Orthopaedics for 8 years. He is new to osteoporosis and learning very quickly. Ronu is pictured below with Denise Pope and new healthcare support worker Sophie Roberts who is keen to help support PAG.

*It has been a privilege to work as the Osteoporosis Clinical Nurse Specialist within the rheumatology department at the BRI for the last 8 years. When I started it was a shock to be back in clinical practice after 9 years working on the osteoporosis charity telephone helpline. The whole team guided me through and helped me to develop the service into what we have today. It has been a long road but we now have an osteoporosis and rare bone disease service to be proud of. We even won a British Society of Rheumatology best practice award in 2020 for the work we did around patient support and education.*

*I have always tried to keep our patients at the heart of what we do, after all they have the most invested in it, and if along the way we have prevented a few fractures, helped patients to take their treatment correctly and promoted physical activity, well my job is done, that is what we are there for. I am sad to be leaving but it is time for a new challenge, thank you for your support and best wishes to you all, Terrie*



*Terrie Stocker and Sheryl Hullah*

## Bristol Bones and Joints Health Integration Team

The Health Integration Teams or HITs are the vision of Bristol Health Partners to improve care in Bristol, North Somerset and Gloucester. Bristol Bones and Joints Health Integration Team (BBJ HIT) was set up to help patients cope with health conditions that affect their bones and joints. Our aim is to bring together patients, researchers, health professionals and organisations that offer care and support, and to share information and resources across the region.

The BBJ HIT holds online coffee mornings every six weeks via Zoom for patients to chat and share their experiences. They are relaxed and fun and everyone is welcome. The next one is on 16th November at 10.30am. Find out more by visiting the address below and clicking on the link or email Jen.Orme@uwe.ac.uk

<https://www.bristolhealthpartners.org.uk/health-integration-teams/bristol-bones-and-joints/>

**Get in touch**— If you would like to know more about PAG, would like to subscribe or contribute to this newsletter, or to become a member, please get in touch.



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